This Way to the Promised Land—in the South

Its Present Assets in Land and Money a Safeguard to the Nation in the Return to Peace and Business

By William R. Lighton

Well known writer of short stories; known better still as a journalist and interpreter of Southern and Western opinion.

IN THE first year of the war the South fared hard. You know why. It was because the states of the South, one and all, had almost no industrial rating, save as producers of raw materials, chiefly cotton and lumber. And the first effect of the war upon those industries was to take the bottom out of them and loosen all their ribs. The South got no benefit, but suffered severely because of the 1914 and 1915 boom in foodstuffs. That was because the Southern states were not producing anything like the food consumed by their own people, but were regularly drawing their supplies from the North. Corn, wheat, oats, potatoes, beef, pork, canned stuffs—make the list as inclusive as you like, excepting only rice and sugar, and you will find that every commonwealth of the South was an importer of every item of food staples. With their principal raw material revenues suddenly cut in half they had to pay almost twice over for food supplies. For a time the experience put them almost on their uppers.

That is all past. You know what has happened to cotton and lumber prices since 1915. And you may have been following the almost heroic effort of the South to feed itself from its own lands. It is a fine story, not to be told here in detail. For the purpose of this argument the facts boil down to this:

In the matter of ready money, realized from the boom in her chief raw materials, the South is fat with prosperity. Cash is piled up everywhere; credit is easy; and the temper of the people, with their pockets stuffed to bursting, is complaisant. Nothing like this has ever happened before in these states.

This prosperity has been begotten and bred by the war. It is not to be credited to Southern genius or cleverness. The Southerners did not themselves engineer the better prices for cotton and lumber. World conditions made the markets and insured the profits. The men of the South had nothing more to do than to produce as much as they were able to meet demands eagerly waiting. It isn't distorting the facts at all to call that "easy money."

Now that the war is finished and we have to reckon with after-effects in the industries, what is likely to happen in the South? Since the South's part in war work, as compared with that of other regions, has been in only a moderate way constructive, how may she go on with her life? Will her prosperity end if conditions in the raw material markets result in a narrowing margin of profit? Will she be content to go on in the old ways, with a happy-go-lucky disposition to be reconciled to whatever happens? Or will she develop new initiative, new strength, and undertake a big programme of industrial development?

That last part of the proposition is what the South is bent upon, what the South earnestly and seriously desires, of course. No people having once enjoyed a state of substantial well-being will deliberately coax for something less. If desires were means for accomplishing ends the desires of the South would carry her far in the time just ahead.

Raw Wealth For the Taking

"But desire isn't enough. The days of wishing are over and gone. The South knows it. The South understands quite well that the end worth while, the end of strong growth and real attainment, will demand something more than the mood of the war years for achievement. The South does not need to be persuaded that constructive effort is altogether different from the labor of producing raw materials. You may take it for granted that, so far as mental perception goes, these states are ready for the change which must inevitably come. They know that somehow a new order of things must come to pass and that it must be developed by a new order of genius.

But the way is not plain and straight. The South has the choice of two courses.

It isn't at all unlikely that if no preventive measures are taken there may come at once a huge, old-fashioned "boom" occasioned by a scramble for possession of the sources of Southern wealth—her lands, her timber, her ores and coal and oil, and what not. Long before the war many millions of outside dollars had found such investment; but it was deliberate, cautious investment in the main, because no man could foresee when broad development would begin. These resources were bought because they were to be had at ridiculously low prices, not because of any promise of early profits. Such speculative buying made no particular impression—there wasn't enough of it, measured against the South's vast treasury. Values were there beyond question, but the sheer deadweight of the mass of opportunities forbade profit taking. There was no boom.

It seems quite certain that in the new time easily available raw wealth like this, no matter what its volume, is not to remain a drug. It will be sought. War time has called attention to it. Instead of adventuring into remote parts of the earth—Mexico, South America, the Far Northwest—American money will undoubtedly seek possession of this undeveloped wealth within our own boundaries.

This will be particularly true of the rich but unused arable lands in the Southern States. Food production, ample for the world's needs, will be the first large concern of peace. The world has been on rations long enough. And here in the South are millions of rich, idle acres to be turned to account. When there was no sharp pinch of hunger to stimulate their use demand lagged. It won't lag now.

If the South will submit to it she may enter at once upon a land boom. In the past her idle land has been at once her greatest asset and her greatest liability. She has not learned fully to appreciate its value. Speaking in the larger terms of comparison with other peoples, the Southerners have not been farmers. Conditions throughout the South prove that. Leaving cotton growing out of the account, most of the examples of truly successful farming in the Southern States have been developed by outsiders. The prosperous small farmer of Southern blood and traditions is rather hard to find.

And so it happens, naturally enough, that the South has looked upon her raw lands as something to unload upon the outsider for whatever they would fetch. Values have never been stabilized anywhere in any rational way by an understanding of the land's earning power. Selling prices are a matter for shrewd bargaining. There has been too much surplus to permit the fixing of values according to the supply and demand theory. Time was, less than a generation ago, when corn was to be bought on the farms in Nebraska for 10 cents a bushel, and no takers. Surplus—mountains of surplus which nobody wanted—determined price. Nobody bothered to talk about feeding value or production cost.

Not Inviting A Boom

The South has been in pretty much that condition this long time with her undeveloped lands. If she doesn't promptly change her state of mind it is merely prophesying the obvious to say that she faces a period of speculative trafficking in this great resource.

The temptation will be strong. The sensation of having plenty of ready money has been very pleasant, all the more pleasant because it came without any special extra effort. If the flow stops from one source, why not open another? And here is that other source ready at hand.

As I have seen the South in the last two or three years, met her moods, judged of her intentions, I am persuaded that she will not submit to any mad boom frenzy without a protest; certainly, she will not deliberately invite it. Five years ago she would have welcomed almost any sort of land boom upon almost any terms, but not to-day.

Go where you will, from the Carolinas to Eastern Texas, and you will find the Southerners pretty much of one mind concerning this proposition of the right disposition of her surplus undeveloped land. Here is a composite presentment of their reasoning:

"What we want now is not dollar-changing, but development; not juggling with the fictions of cashing in on our raw resources, but turning those resources to permanent account. It's true that the proper farming of our unused lands will require that we pass them into new hands—but what hands? Boosting land prices by the sleight-of-hand of speculative methods won't create new wealth. If we stand for that the speculators will pocket the profits of the trading and leave us just where we were, so far as production is concerned. Before we can be any better off, in fact, these lands must be farmed. So it's farmers we want. Let's go after the farmers."

That argument is finding very clear and well organized expression in hundreds of communities. There's New Orleans, for instance. New Orleans has prospered greatly in war times, through war industries, but this long time she has been thinking ahead, knowing that war must end by and by, and desiring to be ready for the readjustments of peace. Her planning has been anything but vague. She has organized herself. Speaking for her, for her civic and industrial interests as a city and for her ambitions as the capital of a new empire, Mayor Martin Behrman is declaring:

"The end of the world war will find all the Allied countries, with the exception of the United States, wofully short of man power. Every inducement will be offered our soldiers to settle permanently in those countries. Canada is already conducting a gigantic and persistent promotion campaign in periodicals throughout this country, seeking to induce our young men to settle there and in a measure replace Canadian losses on the battlefields of Europe. If we are to minimize our loss of citizens through such cause, we must offer them something worth while in our own country—and we have it here in the South. . . . For the tens of thousands who will not wish to return to indoor occupations the North and East have nothing to offer except worn-out, exhausted farms, or farm lands so high in price as to be utterly beyond the reach of the average man. And there is now no possibility of these men reaching Northern farm lands in time to put in a crop for next season. . . . But the South has millions of acres of virgin farm lands, so low in price as to be within reach of every one, and in a climate where the ground can be cultivated and crops grown at any season of the year. . . . The nation has a right to, and an emphatic need for, the undeveloped resources of the South, and we should fail in our duty as patriotic Americans if we should withhold knowledge of these resources from those who could and would take advantage of them."

Food Production The Test

There's no boom temper in that. Other communities by the score are thinking in those terms, preparing to meet the future in just that fashion. If you would let the South alone, permit her to choose her own way of managing things, most assuredly she would take matters in her own hands and do what she could to insure legitimate use, instead of crazy exploitation of her assets. The boomer would have to hurry, and he'd need to be a tough-skinned sort of person at that to make any headway against the South's new-born conceptions.

But that isn't all. There is Secretary Lane's fine programme, conceived just in the nick of time to forestall blundering in the South. That programme is receiving the South's hearty coöperation. Already, quietly, the South's raw lands of every type are being surveyed and catalogued and studied. The work isn't gaining much publicity, but public sentiment is strongly favorable. If there may be Federal control or a reasonable measure of Federal counsel and aid in putting the lands directly into the hands of users the pains of booming will be cut out automatically. They won't even start.

This must not be lost sight of. In the new time the arable lands of the South are not to suffer neglect. That is inconceivable. Conditions which have held them out of use for so long are past and gone. When all is said the human race doesn't value land according to its power to produce cotton or jute or post timber or tobacco, or any other strictly commercial crop. Get right down to it, the world-old and unchanging standard of valuation is the power to produce foodstuffs.

In the South, proof of this power has been lacking. When the rest of the country saw the South spending its cotton money regularly in buying foodstuffs from distant markets, the rest of the country concluded, not illogically, that for some reason the South couldn't produce the food crops in competition with the North and West. The failure was charged, not to the native disposition of the people where it belonged, but to something radically wrong in Southern conditions or in the character of the lands themselves. And so the demand for these lands did not become acute. The Northerner, with his own sound experience to back him, argued that no region can be industrially secure which isn't self-supporting. He thought everybody must understand that. He refused to believe that a great group of states deliberately wouldn't feed themselves if they could. His reasoning did not make him keen to venture southward. Before he could be strongly persuaded, there must be a demonstration of the South's ability to supply herself with food.

War time has afforded that demonstration in full measure, pressed down and running over. The farmer-folk of the nation know now to a certainty that the South is able to produce every staple food crop in rich abundance, and at costs so reduced as to spell double the profits possible to the prairie man. No longer is there any doubt at all about that. Wherefore the farmer is ready to run neck-and-neck with the speculator for possession of these lands. There is not the least need nor any real justification for the intervention of clever middlemen to bring the lands into use.

Another factor will help mightily in settling this matter properly. The South is planning to take a hand in every constructive industry which may be based upon the use of her numberless raw materials. She's ready for that; she's bidding now for the men who will make it possible. In the time coming she will be in the market for all manner of skilled workmen. And she knows well enough that she cannot get them unless she can insure the best of living conditions at reasonable cost. The American skilled worker just won't live out of tin cans and paper boxes. He must have a real food—the best. He'll insist upon good fresh meat and plenty of it—which means that the South must go into meat growing for her own home markets. He'll insist upon an abundance of the best dairy products—which means that the South must go into dairy farming as a business. He'll want quantities of fresh farm stuff, every day of the week, instead of taking it for Sundays and holidays only—which means that Southern farming must be able to supply this demand.

Say what you like about the offer of higher wages; talk yourself black in the face about soft climate, and all that; the plain fact is that the skilled American workman just won't try to get along on a diet of salt pork and turnip greens and corn bread. The food question, more than any other—more than all the others put together—determines whether he's willing to live and work here or there. He wouldn't take a job laying golden pavements in the New Jerusalem if the table living weren't up to the mark. If the South wants him, she must feed him. And the South knows it.

In time past, many and many a promising industry has blown up in the South for exactly that reason. And now the South has quit trying makeshifts and expedients for meeting the condition. Labor simply won't stick anywhere if it can fare better somewhere else. In short, good modern farming, diversified farming, must be for the South as for every other region the very bedrock of sound industrial development. There is no alternative.

The South shrewdly sees that a period of land booming, however interesting or exciting, would seriously handicap the business of productive farming and would delay the whole of the industrial scheme upon which her mind and heart are set. So she'll have none of it if she can possibly manage to head it off.

McAdoo's Mysterious Move

WILLIAM GIBBS M'ADOO set the country guessing when he stepped down from a position only less influential than that of the Presidency. A drain on his health and his personal finances—those were the reasons he gave for resigning as Secretary of the Treasury and Director General of Railroads. No one doubts that his explanations were the truth and nothing but the truth, but were they the whole truth? "The Providence Journal" thinks not. These are its declarations:

"That the basic reason was not inability to live upon the salary paid, but a total disagreement with the set purpose of the President to impose government ownership or government control of all public utilities;

"That he—the Secretary—has never been a public ownership man and was determined not to remain in a Cabinet fast drifting into that policy;

"That recent experience not only strengthened his hostility to such ownership, but brought him into continuous and acrimonious discussion with the President and some members of the Cabinet, more particularly regarding the future of the railroads;

"That he vigorously opposed the seizure of the cables, which was sanctioned by the President;

"That two other members of the Cabinet share his frame of mind, as does also Colonel House, who reached the parting of the ways with Mr. Burleson several months ago, and

"That he has no Presidential aspirations, but desires only not to be put in a false light."

"The Philadelphia Press" suggests another reason:

"His letter of resignation is dated November 14. On that same day the newspapers first published the announcement that the President was considering going abroad in connection with the peace negotiations and only waited to hear the opinion of the country on the question. That opinion was adverse. Perhaps Mr. McAdoo shared in that opinion and shared it strongly, or perhaps his tendering his resignation at that particular time is only a coincidence."

Since Mr. McAdoo has been generally regarded as the most likely Democratic candidate for President to succeed his father-in-law, some observers were certain to regard it as a political move. That is the interpretation of "The Philadelphia Inquirer," from which is quoted:

"It seems certain that the next national political campaign will be fought out largely on the socialistic issue. All indications are to the effect that the present Administration will favor permanent operation of railways, telegraphs, telephones and other utilities by the nation. Nothing more melancholy could be contemplated, as it would mean a constantly decreasing efficiency in service, a greater cost of transportation and the building up of the most colossal political machine in the history of the world. Government operation of railways has everywhere been a failure and always must be.

"It seems likely that in 1920 we shall have another such campaign as that of 1896. National ownership and operation will at first appeal to the masses as much as did the free coinage of silver, but in the meantime experience ought to demonstrate its futility. The Administration is now in the hands of two Cabinet members from Texas, and Mr. House, also of that state; of Mr. Baker, who was born and educated in Virginia and only recently moved to Ohio, where he entered public life.

"There is not left a strong man in the Cabinet, but it is believed that a majority of them are of socialistic leanings. That is what makes the retirement of Mr. McAdoo the more lamentable. He was an able, safe and sane man."

There is little but praise for Mr. McAdoo's career prior to his resignation. "The New York Globe" says of him:

"He has steered a middle course, laying on New York a burden not always fair, and yielding at times too much to Kitchinism, but never to the extent of provoking insurrection. The highly successful campaigns for the Liberty loans, of which Mr. McAdoo was commander in chief, will long be remembered. As Webster said of Hamilton, so it may be said of Secretary McAdoo, that he struck the rock of private riches and abundant streams of wealth gushed forth."

"The New York Times" thinks it a pity that—

"the niggardliness of our democracy toward its servants has again compelled a public officer of the first order of worth and capacity to resign an ill paid office at a critical time to repair his private fortune, no small part of which has been spent to pay his living expenses while in office."

Of his ability, "The Washington Post" comments:

"Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo, who is to leave the Cabinet very soon and who will quit as Director General of Railroads in January, is the recipient of more offers of good jobs than any other man in the country. Big business concerns are after his services and are willing to pay him as much for one month as the government pays him for a whole year. A man of his capacity and proved ability can dictate his own salary when signing up with a business establishment."

Very unfortunate, thinks "The Baltimore Sun":

"To say that the government of the great United States must be deprived of the services of such a man because it cannot pay him a living salary is to confess something very discreditable to our country."

But "The Philadelphia North American" bluntly calls him "the quitter" in an editorial from which is quoted:

"The Secretary goes out of his way to impress upon the public that his service to the nation has been performed at serious financial loss to himself. The emphasis may have been used in order to discredit reports that he had not suffered heavily in this respect. One undoubted merit of his statement is that it does not invite admiration on the pretence that the decision is an act of patriotic self-sacrifice. Mr. McAdoo does not invoke the lofty sentiments which he urged upon his countrymen in his eloquent appeals to stand by the government at any cost.

"And now, while a million young Americans are to continue at their posts of duty abroad for $30 a month and up, the Secretary coolly announces that he cannot afford to serve the nation at $12,000 a year, and must abandon his work at a crucial time in order to make money. From any other member of the Cabinet, or at a less troublous period in the nation's history, Mr. McAdoo's decision would have no ominous meaning. But coming from him, and in view of the responsibilities committed to his care, it reveals a concept of public duty which reflects upon him and will go further to confirm the belief that personal interests, and not public service, control the whole Administration."

A Thunderclap Casualty List

IT WAS with mingled emotions Americans learned that their total casualties in the world war were nearly a quarter of a million—236,117, according to General Pershing's report—and that 52,169 Americans had given their lives abroad. There was relief on knowing the toll and surprise at its extent.

Only two weeks before there had been a reassuring statement from Washington that—

"careful estimates based on knowledge of the battle conditions in the days immediately preceding cessation of hostilities lead officials to believe that all unpublished and unreported casualties will not exceed thirty thousand."

Although the public generally knew that the casualty lists were far behind the fighting, it was not quite prepared for so large a list of unreported casualties. "The New York Globe" states the situation frankly:

"The policy of secrecy and suppression (so it must be described) pursued by the War Department seems indefensible. Six months ago the War Department gave solemn assurances that it would be frank with the American people. It has not been. No one will contend for an instant that it has not known, and long known, the truth.

"Having been guilty of deliberate suppression, it does not lessen its offence by suddenly plumping out the gross figures of a tripled list. Giving no names and only stating totals, it has brought cruel anxiety to approximately 2,000,000 American households. Each is wondering whether its loved one is included in the unpublished list. Having deceived the country for several months, it would seem as if there might have been persistence in the deceit until the names were available and could be communicated to the bereft. Every family which has not heard from its absent member since the close of hostilities now sits in fear because the War Department, recognizing that the truth must soon come out, suddenly resolved to confess and was so desirous of escaping from its embarrassment that it did not care about anything else.

"Not an hour should be lost in collecting and transmitting casualty information. If the cables are clogged the lists should be put aboard the fastest ship of the navy. It is nearly two weeks since the last shot was fired, and even though there were no cables the War Department by this time should know who have been lost. Leaving out of view the insult to the American people, the War Department's policy has most reprehensibly assailed the peace of mind of countless homes."

"The New York Evening Post" thinks an explanation is due from the War Department:

"What startled the public in learning of the total American casualties in France was not so much the number as the fact that the War Department apparently did not know the true figures. Shortly after the signing of the armistice, the War Department issued an official estimate that the casualties would not much exceed 100,000. Now General Pershing's reports push up the number to 235,000. The deaths rise from an estimated 30,000 to more than 50,000 actually. It is difficult to understand how cable congestion, or even the intensely hard fighting of the last few days before Germany surrendered, could account for the enormous discrepancy. In proportion to the forces engaged and the results obtained, the final casualty list is not greater than might have been expected. But an explanation seems to be due why the War Department was so grossly misinformed."

Comparisons are made to show how small our losses really are alongside those of other belligerents. "The New York Sun" points out:

"Our deaths were nearly twenty times less than those of Great Britain, which lost nearly as many men at the Dardanelles, in one vain effort, as America lost altogether. For every American grave in France there are thirty Frenchmen's graves."

"The Springfield Union" refers to our losses in the two preceding wars:

"In our Civil War more than 300,000 men in the Union armies were killed in battle, or died of wounds and disease, and 200,000 more were crippled for life. If the Confederate armies suffered as heavily, and they undoubtedly did, the nation thus lost 1,000,000 able-bodied men. In our war with Spain 336 men were killed, 125 were mortally wounded and 5,277 died of disease. That was our shortest war, lasting only from the latter part of April to the middle of August, 1898, and it was a war in which the losses were mostly on the side of the enemy. As compared with our civil strife in the '60s, the Spanish War was but child's play, and when we compare our losses in the war against the Teutonic powers we have a better appreciation of the sacrifices made for the preservation of the Union."

"The price of freedom" is high, "The New York World" admits:

"It was a costly service, but it had to be rendered to the uttermost. Song and story will never cease to immortalize, gratitude will never neglect to crown with its tributes the price these fifty thousand young Americans, with heads held high and hearts undaunted, paid for the freedom of the nations."

"The Philadelphia Inquirer" concludes:

"The world has lost much, but at least it has gained something in ideals which ought to make this planet a more desirable place in which to live than ever before."

UNDER THE EVENING STAR—By Charles Henry-Hirsch

Translated by William L. McPherson

Here is an idyll of the war—tender and fragrant. It has an exquisite simplicity and restraint. And it is written by a man of letters, whose forte is sophistication rather than simplicity.

Charles Henry-Hirsch is not one of the younger group of French short story writers. He has been publishing fiction since 1894, and is distinguished for preciosity in style as well as for imaginative subtlety. This story, however, is delightfully natural in form and feeling.

THEY were seated side by side on the beach. She plunged her hands in the sand as she talked and let the grains trickle through her fingers. The bay was a sheet of light, spreading toward the glowing and reddening west. A band of clouds, irregular in shape, formed on the horizon a pathetic outline of donjons, towers and steeples, encircled by a wall of pearl gray vapor. The breeze came in from the sea, just strong enough to flatten the young girl's white silk costume against her arms, shoulders and breast.

To him, who had just left the war behind him and who was about to be swallowed up by it again within a few days, the setting, its calm, the voice which came to him out of the clear depths of the other's soul—all seemed unreal. He looked and listened, confused in his sensations of happiness, not knowing whether it was truly for him that those words were taking shape—words of a singular quality of tone, pure as the air, words which he wished always to recall. They had the fresh perfume of a youth protected by modesty. When a phrase had come and gone the silence seemed still to vibrate with it.

The young man didn't dare to break that silence in spite of the eager impatience of his heart. Then the young girl asked him some question, with a smile. Or she began to talk once more, yielding to the attraction of certain words which revealed her mind, but which neither her parents nor her best girl friend would ever have heard her use as she was now using them. Their facile outpouring surprised her, and it seemed to her at times that she was almost discovering herself when she uttered them.

Finally, because she grew silent and ceased to smile at him—beautiful, suffused with the mellowness which tinged the sky, a reflection of the enigma of the approaching twilight on her delicate face—he confessed the great happiness which possessed him.

"Never, nowhere, have I been as happy, mademoiselle, as I am now."

"Take care. We agreed"——

"But you consented to our meeting, after three years of correspondence."

"I consented only when you pressed me to do so."

"Do you regret it?"

"I don't know how to make compliments."

"That is one, mademoiselle."

"An involuntary one, in any case. And you wrote me one day: 'Nothing ought to be involuntary.'"

"What a day that was. We were"——

With a gesture he waved away the hideous memory which would have peopled with dead men and with scenes of violence the little bay, on which the sun was sinking below the almost motionless waters. The breeze brought from afar the sound of a cannon shot, of another, of a third.

"I was going to recount to you an hour of war and they call me to order."

They listened. But nothing came in from the sea but the rolling of the surf. She retained an expression of anxiety, each of her hands clenching the sand which it had scooped up.

"Aren't you afraid of catching cold?" asked the young man.

She shivered, as if he had touched her. Then she answered, quoting Verlaine:

"'It is the exquisite hour.'"

In vain she talked of the dinner, of the guests who were now playing bridge, without giving even a glance at the sea. In vain he talked of other things. They were thinking each of the other, and that fact, which troubled them equally, quickly suspended their conversation.

The horizon was fading out. Under the yellowing sky the brown rocks emerged, enormous, from a scintillating green-gold surface. She was thinking that in a few days he would be looking at the ravaged country at the front, instead of all this quietude and splendor. At the same moment he exclaimed:

"And to think that it is necessary to go back *there!*"

Without a transition, he added:

"I have only you, mademoiselle—to whom I cling."

Letter by letter he had confided to her his whole life—all his ambitions, what sorrows had softened him, the maturity which had come to him through the rude trials of the war. He had sent his picture to his "dear godmother," in order to induce her, in exchange, to reveal a little of her outward appearance; her age, at least; if she were free, or merely the color of her hair. She had ended by agreeing that he should come to spend his furlough in this little bathing resort by the sea, to which he had addressed his letters to her the summer before.

"You should have prevented me from coming if you will not permit me to express the feelings which you—— I beg your pardon. I make you think that I am a brute."

"What an idea!"

"But, yes. I could not go away without telling you—that I love you. There is too much of the romantic in our adventure. I dare not reproach you for that, since your kindness has made it worth my while to have been down there. However, when I am no longer here, won't you remember this evening with a little of the same emotion which masters me? I have loved the tender camaraderie of your letters, their indulgence, their spirit—that which they have carried to me—down there at the front—of the sense of motherliness and of youth. You couldn't even suspect the value of all that to an orphan like me.

"To-day I am sure that I loved you from your very first letter. I have loved you with all that is in me—with a love, ardent and respectful, which can no longer be silenced. I beg you, mademoiselle, listen to me. My love cannot offend you. It seemed to me at the front that I was enduring everything in your defence. And I didn't know your age, your station or even what you looked like. But I read into your heart, and you unfolded your intelligence to me. You have surpassed all the images which I formed of you. You resemble them all a little. I see my ideal at last. I love you. I have written you that a soldier has no right to become engaged before the end of the war. I take it back. That is all I can say. If it is egoism—and I admit that is—I hold that one can tolerate a certain egoism in us who fight. Am I not right, mademoiselle?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I should like to give you an answer"——

He looked her straight in the eyes. They unveiled themselves slowly. She believed that the falling night would conceal the happy smile in them, whose sweetness she could no longer conceal.

"I am afraid of catching cold," she said. "Shall we go in?"

Because of the disappointed look on his face she insisted:

"Get up and help me!"

"Oh! Pardon me!" he said, apologetically.

When he had pulled her to her feet she did not loosen her hands from his, and drew him gently toward her.

"You see, my father is on the terrace of the villa. He is looking at us. And I tell you that I am infinitely happy that you love me, Pierre."

"Mademoiselle"——

"You may kiss me. Papa will say nothing. He expects it. Mamma would be with him if there were not a game of bridge. They knew that you would kiss me, perhaps, on the rising of the first star. It has risen."

"I love you."

"I am not at all romantic, am I?"

"I adore you."